

Proposal on Graduation Requirements

PREPARATORY AREAS (14.5 units)		EXIT COMPETENCIES* (3.5 units)		TOTAL
Language Arts	2	Language Arts - Eleventh Grade	1	3
Math	1	Geometry or Applied Math II or Higher**	1	2
Science	1	Biology, Chemistry, Physics, or other advanced course	1	2
Social Studies	2	United States Government & Citizenship	0.5	2.5
Fine Arts	1.5			1.5
Health	1.0			1.0
Physical Fitness	1.0			1.0
Education Technology	0.5			0.5
Financial Literacy	0.5			0.5
Applied Technology	1			1
Electives - Focused	3			3
Totals	14.5		3.5	18.0

Background and Introduction

The Utah State Board of Education has been concerned about the rigor of high school graduation requirements and on November 1, 2002 the Board voted to increase student competency. Subsequently, the 2003 Legislature passed SB 154 directing the Board and State Superintendent of Public Instruction to: focus on core academics, increase graduation requirements, assure high school seniors are progressing in challenging courses, and implement competency standards for progress and graduation.

Following is the resulting proposal. The proposal will:

- a. "Raise the bar" so that all students will graduate with core curriculum competency
- b. Focus on core academics and maintain a balanced curriculum
- c. Require significant parental involvement, increased student commitment, and increased public support to be successful

Diplomas will be awarded to students accumulating:

- 18 graduation units by demonstrating competency for each unit of credit
- successfully completing exit competencies and
- showing successful experience in additional curriculum areas.

Present Requirements

15 units in various subjects and a minimum of 9 units of unspecified electives for a total of 24 units.

Proposed Requirements

The new requirement of 18 graduation units represents an increase of 3.0 units over the existing specified graduation requirements, as well as an increase in the proficiency required.

***Students may demonstrate competency in different ways:**

Successful demonstration shall be through one of the following:

1. Earning a grade of C or better in the class and passing the appropriate criterion referenced end-of-level test (CRT)
2. Earning a grade of A in the class and taking the CRT
3. Providing evidence of preparation in the subject area and passing the CRT
4. Where end-of-level CRTs do not exist, successfully passing a class of the appropriate content with a grade of C or better, or demonstrating competency

**The math competency and any one of the other exit competency subjects listed above must be successfully completed and/or demonstrated during the student's last year of high school; the other two competencies within the last two years of high school.

Districts will maintain autonomy within requirements.

Schools may exceed the 18 graduation units specified, according to the following conditions.

1. The basic high school opportunity must be, minimally, a six period (preferably of 55 minutes each) day per year.
2. Districts may have schedules resulting in greater numbers of credits, providing that one third of the additional credits/electives are specified in district graduation requirements for either English/ language arts, mathematics, or science.

Student Education Occupation Plan (SEOP) is fundamental.

The SEOP shall be the vehicle through which a student, his or her parent or guardian, and the school representative verify that the student is garnering the necessary competencies. By this means, the “area of focus” electives should be selected and the student’s educational experience customized. Areas of focus could be academic preparation for college, applied technology programs and preparation for employment, or emphasis in music, art, or other areas of personal student interest. The individualized education plan (IEP) will remain the means by which the education program for special education students is determined.

Implementation of this plan depends upon significant additional funding.

Interventions for students are essential. When learning becomes the constant (as opposed to seat time), additional funds must be available to address the different learning needs of individual students. Resources must be provided for counseling and critical interventions (e.g. tutoring, remedial classes, after school programs, summer school, or other supplemental services) without which students not achieving essential levels of proficiency will never be able to do.

Articulation with higher education will increase the value.

The productivity of the state’s investment in public education would be increased if curriculum standards, objectives, and competencies beyond the exit competencies were articulated with the state’s institutions of higher education. Such articulation would provide incentive to students to continue study within those curricular areas while in high school, and simultaneously develop a meaningful transcript of higher education credits; thus enabling students to matriculate into the higher education system with substantial numbers of prerequisite or general education credits already completed.

Time Line and Comments

Sept. -- Oct .	-Public comment meetings held in areas of state, hosted by Board Members
October	-Ad Hoc Committee meets to consider input received through public comments and refine proposal as necessary.
Fall 2003	-Governors Competency Summit -Final action to approve new graduation requirements by Utah State Board of education, including adoption of time line for implementation.

Frequently Asked Questions

When Will This Take Effect?

For the class of 2008.

It looks like you are going from 24 required classes to 18 required classes. Isn't this a lowering of standards?

No. Graduation standards are being raised from 15 required courses to 18 and competency – not just seat time – is being required in all 18 courses.

Are you eliminating electives, then?

Not really. The plan requires districts to offer at least six periods of instruction per school day. That adds up to 24 classes (six classes per year times four years). That leaves six electives or two electives plus four release-time classes. All districts in Utah currently offer more than six periods of instruction per day. This will create more elective course opportunities.

The plan potentially could allow more focused students to concentrate solely on required courses and then study more in depth courses or graduate sooner.

The plan may effectively reduce electives for students who are unable to demonstrate competency in required courses. They will spend more time on the required courses at the expense of electives until they achieve competency.

What's in this for the top-performing student?

Students who can quickly demonstrate competency in required courses can take more challenging courses, graduate early, or focus more time on elective courses. It should help end academic boredom.

What's in this for the low performing student?

Students who struggle with the required courses will be given the help they need to make sure their high school diploma stands for a certain level of knowledge.

What's in this for Employers?

Utah high school graduates will be able to meet a certain level of expectation in mathematics, in reading and writing skills, in financial literacy, in knowledge of America and its institutions.

Why are public schools asking for more money to implement this plan?

Competency puts a greater resource burden on the schools. Students will no longer be able to pass on to the next grade level with a D average. More remedial classes, after-school classes, and summer school programs will be needed for students who can't show competency the first time in required courses. Students will need more counseling to choose their focus electives. Students planning to attend a college or university will also need additional counseling on meeting higher education enrollment standards.

Utah State Board of Education

Comments? Email grad@usoe.k12.ut.us

To see the complete proposal go to www.usoe.k12.ut.us/PR/Competencydraft.htm